

Exodus 18:21-27 - Thursday, December 18th, 2008

- We only made it to verse 20 last week, so after a quick review, we'll pick it up in verse 21 tonight. This is a most interesting chapter.
- In verses 1-6 we're told that the news of what God had done for Moses and the Israelites had spread throughout the land.
- This "good news" as it were, had reached Jethro, Moses' father-in-law in Midian who will now, along with his family, be reunited to him.
- In verses 7-8 Moses sees his family after what had probably been about one year of being away from them.
- Once they're reunited, Moses tells his father-in-law Jethro all that God had done in the Exodus out of Egypt.
- In verse 9-12 Jethro makes a profession of faith, of sorts, when he says that "Now he knows that the Lord is greater than all the gods,"
- In verses 13-16 we find Jethro observing a day in the life of his son in law Moses, and is seemingly disturbed by what he has to do.
- Jethro questions Moses about his dawn to dusk counseling appointments and Moses responds by telling them that he has to do it.
- Actually, he's really the only one who can make known God's statutes and laws to the Israelites in order to resolve problems.
- In verses 17-18 Jethro tells him that this is not good, and he cannot continue on like this or he will wear out and burn out. It's too much.
- In verses 19-20 Jethro counsels Moses about what to do in order to avoid burning out and wearing out.
- He tells him that he's to first go before God for the people. In other words, go to God for the people before going to the people for God.

1. Pray for the people
2. Teach the people
3. Show the people
4. Delegate to the people (As we'll see in the next verse.)

21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.

- Jethro tells Moses that he needs to delegate the burden of responsibility to godly men whom he can trust to carry out these duties.
- These men to whom he delegates are to judge over the small matters, but still bring the greater matters to Moses for his judgment.
- It's important that we not see Moses as abdicating his leadership responsibility here. He is exercising his leadership, not abandoning it.
- Also, this would have made it easier, not only for Moses, but for Israel as well, who would be more peaceful as we'll see in verse 23.
- Actually they would have settled their disputes more quickly, and their problems and controversies wouldn't have lasted so long.

"The longer a controversy lasts, the worse the tangle becomes, the more hot words are spoken, the more bystanders become involved."
F.B. Meyer

23 If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace."

- Notice here in verse 23 where Jethro says that if God commands this and he does this he will be able to endure, and it will be peaceful.
- In other words, Jethro is giving this counsel to Moses, but ultimately he needs to hear from the Lord for himself before actually doing it.
- Also, notice in verse 21 the list of qualifications these men need to have before being placed in those leadership positions over Israel.

1. Men of ability: **able men**
2. Men of godliness: **such as fear God**
3. Men of God's Word: **men of truth**
4. Men of honor: **hating covetousness**

- In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul counseled Timothy in the same way to entrust to able and reliable men who were qualified.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. NIV

- In the book of Acts we see how delegating roles and responsibilities to trustworthy men can actually prevent unnecessary contention.

Acts 6:1-7 1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." 5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. NIV

- Also, in the Pastoral Epistles, as they're called, we are given a similar list by which to gauge who we should or shouldn't delegate to.

1 Timothy 3:1-4:1 1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. 11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. 12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. 13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

- This is a good checklist from 1st Timothy, because it gives us the criteria with which to measure who can be entrusted in the ministry.

- ☐ 1- Am I trustworthy, are my desires noble, and my motives right? (Verse 1)
- ☐ 2- Am I living right, so I can't be rightly blamed for being in willful sin? (Verse 2)
- ☐ 3- Am I a one-woman man or a flirt whether I'm single or married? (Verse 2)
- ☐ 4- Am I self-restrained in my behavior, and able to control my actions? (Verse 2)
- ☐ 5- Am I sensible, having a sound mind to make respectable decisions? (Verse 2)
- ☐ 6- Am I hospitable, willing to share what's mine with others? (Verse 2)
- ☐ 7- Am I willing in and out of season, to teach others, even one on one? (Verse 2)
- ☐ 8- Am I a drinker who could be found to be drunk often? (Verse 3, 8)
- ☐ 9- Am I considered contentious, combative, argumentative or mean? (Verse 3)
- ☐ 10- Am I one who is known by how I want to make a lot of money? (Verse 3)
- ☐ 11- Am I the spiritual leader, and financial provider in my home? (Verses 4-5)
- ☐ 12- Am I respected by my children, in spite of their rebellion and sin? (Verses 4-5)
- ☐ 13- Am I a mature believer having not been recently born again? (Verse 6)
- ☐ 14- Am I one who is meek, or a mocker spreading strife and discord? (Verse 7)
- ☐ 15- Am I one who has a good name with people even outside the Church? (Verse 7)
- ☐ 16- Am I one who could serve anywhere even if it wasn't in leadership? (Verse 8)
- ☐ 17- Am I one who is honest, and truthful, in word and deed? (Verse 9)
- ☐ 18- Am I one whose doctrine is true and conviction sincere? (Verse 9)
- ☐ 19- Am I recognized because of my conduct, as being a good fit? (Verse 10)
- ☐ 20- Am I one who if put to the test, would have something disqualify me? (Verse 10)
- ☐ 21- Am I one whose wife is of honorable character, faithful and trustworthy? (Verses 11-12)
- ☐ 22- Am I one whose wife is a malicious gossip, in whom she talks about? (Verses 11-12)
- ☐ 23- Am I one who considers thankless service as menial? (Verse 13)
- ☐ 24- Am I one who sees serving as excelling and rewarding in my faith? (Verse 13)

24 So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 26 So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves. 27 Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.

- Notice that Moses heeds the voice of his father-in-law Jethro. Moses is indeed humble and teachable in how he receives this counsel.

- We're then told that he chooses the able men and positions them as leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties and even the tens.

"It is better to set a hundred men to work than to do the work of a hundred men."

D.L. Moody

- In his book, "The Calvary Chapel Distinctives," Pastor Chuck writes about Pastor's and leaders learning from what Moses did here.

"Under Moses, the personal demands were staggering. They would come to Moses for every little thing so he could judge between them and their neighbors on the issues that had arisen. Jethro, his father-in-law, said, "Hey, son, this is going to kill you. You can't handle this... So the Lord told Moses to take seventy of the elders of Israel and gather them into the tent of congregation. He took the Spirit that He had put upon Moses and put it upon them so that the people could come to them and they could give the rulings and judgments. If issues arose that were too difficult for them, they were then to go to Moses. Moses would then go to God to get clarification on the issue. In the church today we see this structure in a modified form. We see that Jesus Christ is the Head over the body of the church. It's His church. He's the One in charge. As pastors, we need to be like Moses, in touch with Jesus and receiving His direction and guidance. As pastors we need to be leading the church in such a way that the people know that the Lord is in control. Then, when issues come up, we can say, "Well let me pray about that." "Let me seek the wisdom of the Lord on this." ... It's also important to remember that problems usually arise when you start to have some success and the church begins to grow and become powerful. There are many people who have a desire for power. "When they see there's money in the bank that's when they make their move for position and control. It's necessary to have godly men who recognize that God has called and ordained you as the pastor of the church. Men who will work with you and support those things that God is directing you, as the pastor, to implement within the church".

The Calvary Chapel Distinctives, Pastor Chuck Smith

Lessons I can learn from Exodus chapter 18:

1. Like with Jethro hearing about all God had done for Israel, so too may those who hear what God is doing for us, want to be around us.
2. Like with Moses sending his family back to Midian, so too may we have to endure periods of separation from family while on missions.
3. Like with Moses telling Jethro everything God had done, so too should we tell others of how God delivered us from our Egypt.
4. Like with Jethro saying that he now knows the Lord is greater, so too should we not assume that our Jethro's are already believers.
5. Like with Jethro telling Moses that it's not good he wears himself out, so too are we of no good for ourselves and even others as well.
6. Like with the Israelites going to Moses to settle disputes, so too will we have disputes when we don't know God's Word for ourselves.
7. Like with Moses first going to God for the people, so too should we first talk to the Lord for people, before we go to people for the Lord.
8. Like with Moses humbly receiving counsel from Jethro, so too should we be humble and teachable when we are given godly counsel.

- Before we leave chapter 18, I would like to share with you something else here that I think we would be grossly remiss to not see.
- What we've studied up to now has a marvelous and even miraculous scripture picture powerfully pointing to the person of Jesus Christ.
- Woven in the fabric of the text is a painting of a prophetic portrait of salvation from the incarnation to the salvation of Israel as a nation.

SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
Manna (the bread of life) comes down from heaven	The incarnation of Jesus Christ, who comes down from heaven
Moses smites the Rock with the rod, then, life sustaining water comes out	The crucifixion of Jesus who the rock, was smitten by the serpent/rod and life giving water pours out
Moses lifts up his hands and defeats the Amalekites.	The resurrection Jesus Christ, who hands were stretched out defeats death
Zipporah is separated from her husband Moses, over a bloody circumcision of her son. (Exodus 4:25-26)	Israel is separated from her husband Jehovah, over a bloody crucifixion of her Son
Gershom the one son whose name means; "I have been an alien in a strange land"	The wandering Jew for almost 2,000 years had been an alien in a strange land
Moses has two sons	Israel would be divided into two kingdoms
Eliezer the 2 nd born son whose name means "God is helper"	The Jews are re-born, (2 nd born), as a nation with God as their helper
Jethro, the gentile Priest of Midian, brings Zipporah back to Moses	The Christians, (gentile Priests) provokes the Jews to jealousy, and bring them back to Jesus (Romans 11:11)
Moses and Zipporah, at her second coming, are united on the Mount of God	Jesus and Israel, at His 2 nd coming, are united on the Mount of Olives
They offer sacrifices as and burnt offering to God	They will offer sacrifices to God in the Kingdom Age, not for salvation but as a memorial and celebration of salvation